posts were issued only after the recommendations of the Selection Committee were approved by the Governing Body (Appointing Authority). As per past practice, the orders of appointment were issued before the minutes of the Governing Body were formally approved.

Surendernagar-Bhavnagar gauge conversion

*369. SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Surendernagar-Bhavnagar gauge conversion and extension to Pipavav was approved by Government even when many new rail lines were only announced and not approved; and

(b) in view of the economic viability of the project the reasons for starving it of funds?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Surendernagar-Bhavnagar project was cleared by Planning Commission/Expanded Board based on substantial private funding from Gujarat Pipavav Port Ltd. Since this funding has not yet materialised, alternative funding sources are being explored. Meanwhile, to progress the work, and amount of Rs. 30 crore has been provided in the Budget 1999-2000. This outlay is quite adequate for the activities of earthwork and bridges which can be taken up in the first year of any project of this type.

Demarcation of Rail routes

*370. SHRI SATISH CHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to close down some economically unviable rail routes;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the number of rail routes demarcated as economically unviable?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) to (c) In 1997-98, there were 113 economically unviable branch lines on Indian Railways. The losses being suffered in operation and maintenance of these lines have been a cause for concern to the Government. Various high level committees have made recommendations for closure of such uneconomic branch lines. Railways go by the recommendations of the high level Railway Reforms Committee which had inter alia recommended in 1983 for closure of (i) 40 such lines where alternate road services are available and (ii) 17 lines in Gujarat where alternative road services could be developed. Out of these 57(40+17) lines, Zonal Railways have so far closed 19 lines only.

In view of various social implications, no instructions have as yet been issued to the Zonal Railways to close down the remaining lines.

पामोलीन तेल की पैंकिंग के लिये ठेका दिया जाना

*371. **श्री ईश दत्त यादव** :

प्रो0 रामगोपाल यादव :

क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि :

(क) क्या सरकार ने पामोलीन तेल की पैंकिग का ठेका निविदा आमंत्रित किए बिना एक दामदार कंपनी को दे दिया हैं,

(ख) यदि हां, तो उक्त कंपनी का नाम क्या हैं तथा सभी सरकारी नियमों को दर-किनार कर उसे ठेका दिये जाने के कारण क्या हैं और इसके लिये कौन-कौन जिम्मेदार हैं,

(ग) क्या सरकार उक्त ठेके को तत्काल प्रभाव से निरस्त कर जिम्मेदार अधिकारियों के विरुद्ध कार्यवाही करना चाहेगी, और

(घ) यदि हां, तो उसका ब्यौरा क्या हैं तथा पामोलीन तेल की विधिवत तरीके से पैंकिंग के लिए सरकार द्वारा क्या कदम उठाये जाएंगे और कब ?